

Suggestions for Parents

As you talk with your children's teachers about results of the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, one question you may have is, "How can I help them do better?"

Parents or guardians play an important role in their children's education. Positive attitudes at home about completing school assignments, learning new skills, and "doing your best" can make a difference. Research about learning shows that a great deal can be done at home to increase a student's academic performance.

There are many things you can do to support your students' education. Some activities for helping your students in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, and other academic areas follow.

In Reading and Writing

- Talk with your children about their studies, homework, and what they did at school. Listen to your children read and read stories aloud to them.
- Have a family time when you read the newspaper, a magazine, or a book, and your children read their own books. Talk about what you and your children are reading and words they do not understand.
- Encourage your children to write such things as shopping lists, thank-you notes, requests, short stories, recipes, and journals.
- Set a limit on the amount of time your children watch television. Watch and discuss television programs with them whenever possible.
- Take your children to the library regularly and help them select their books.

In Mathematics

- Attend parent education classes about mathematics to prepare for questions that your children might ask at home.

- Check with your children every day to make sure homework assignments are completed.
- Ask questions about mathematics and solve problems as you play games, watch television, or prepare a favorite recipe.
- Show children how you use mathematics in what you do every day (e.g., cooking, crafts, automobile repair, speedometer reading, shopping).
- Help your children read charts or graphs in newspapers, magazines, or television, and talk about what they mean.

In Other Academic Areas

Other academic areas such as science and history challenge students to combine reading and mathematics skills with their knowledge of the subject. Parents should share their interests in these academic areas because children become interested in what is discussed at home. Family trips might include visits to museums and historic sites. Television viewing might include one night a week when the family chooses to learn about a topic of the student's choice. Newspapers, magazine articles, or television programs about a new scientific discovery or an important historical event should be shared and discussed.

You Can Help Your Children Do Better on Tests

- Attend parent information meetings. Ask questions about the major tests given to students and other ways academic achievement is measured.
- Know when the major tests such as the STAR test will be given and what grade levels and subject areas will be covered.
- Discuss coming tests with your children and try to reduce pre-test anxieties.
- Make sure your children get a good night's rest and breakfast before a big test.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences to find out how well your children are achieving and what they need to do to improve.



2000 STAR Results to Parents/Guardians

This spring, more than 4 million students throughout the state participated in California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. All students in grades 2 through 8 took the STAR test in reading, written expression (language), spelling, and mathematics. Students in grades 9, 10, and 11 were tested in reading, writing (language), mathematics, science, and history-social science.

For the third year, students were tested in English with the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, Form T (Stanford 9). As part of the STAR program, students also were administered additional test questions that address state-adopted content standards for reading, writing, and mathematics. This

part of the testing program is called the California Standards Test. The purpose of this test is to better align the STAR program with state standards that specify what students should know and be able to do at every grade.

In addition to the STAR test in English, limited English proficient Spanish-speaking students who first enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months prior to testing were given the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education (SABE/2).

Reports of each student's results on the test are mailed home within 20 days after they arrive in the district. Reports of results for the Stanford 9 with the STAR augmentation are separate from the report of results for the SABE/2.

Parent Assistance

As parents or guardians begin to review their children's STAR 2000 results, many questions may come to mind. Parents can get questions answered in a number of ways. They can contact their children's teacher or school office. A variety of school activities to inform parents about individual student and school results for STAR 2000 may be planned. Information also may be available through the STAR test coordinator at the school district office.

The California Department of Education also has prepared a special assistance packet for Reporting 2000 STAR Results to Parents/Guardians that addresses all parts of the STAR program in more detail. This parent assistance packet has been posted at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests> on the Internet. A Spanish translation of the sample materials for parents also is posted on the Internet. Copies of the English and Spanish version of the assistance packet were distributed to school districts and county offices of education.



Questions & Answers for Parents

What is the STAR testing program?

One part of the state testing system is the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. This program, administered annually, was authorized in 1997 by state law (Senate Bill 376). The purpose of the STAR testing program is to help measure how well students are learning basic academic skills.

Who must take the STAR tests?

All students in grades 2 through 11 must take the designated STAR tests. Students learning English and students in special education programs are included. Only students whose Individual Education Plans specifically exempt them from statewide testing and students with written parent/guardian requests to exempt them do not take the STAR tests.

What tests did the students take in 2000?

For the third year, public school students were tested with the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, Form T (Stanford 9), published by Harcourt Educational Measurement.

Students in grades 2 through 11 were tested in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students in grades 2 through 8 also were tested in spelling; students in grades 9 through 11 also were tested in history-social science and science.

As part of the STAR program, students were given additional test questions that match state-adopted content standards for reading, writing, and mathematics. This test is called the California Standards Test. The purpose of this test is to better align the STAR program with state standards.

What about limited English proficient students?

Limited English proficient Spanish-speaking students who were enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months prior to testing must take a primary language test in Spanish in addition to taking the other STAR tests in English. Primary language testing may be given to students who were enrolled more than 12 months prior to testing.

What primary language test was given in spring 2000?

The designated test in Spanish for spring 2000 was the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education, Second Edition (SABE/2). This test is published by CTB/McGraw-Hill. The SABE/2 covers reading, language, mathematics, spelling at grades 2 through 11; word analysis at grades 2 and 3; and study skills at grades 4 through 11.

Who gave the STAR tests, and how long did they take?

Teachers who received special training gave the STAR tests at the local school. It took about seven hours for the Stanford 9 and California Standards Test. The primary language test added about four hours for limited English-proficient students taking the SABE/2. In most schools STAR testing was spread over several days.

How were the questions on the tests asked?

All of the test questions were in a multiple-choice format. These questions required students to select the correct answer from four possible answers. Questions on the Stanford 9 and SABE/2 tests were tried out with thousands of students throughout the United States to see if they are appropriate for the grade level and content being tested. Questions for the Standards Test were tried out on students throughout California.

What was done to help students with special needs?

Most students with special needs took the test with all other students under standard conditions. Certain accommodations were provided for students who needed special assistance if their Individual Education Plans called for them.

How and when do parents/guardians get their student's test results?

Each student's test results must be reported to parents/guardians within 20 working days after the school district receives them. In most cases these reports are mailed. Group results by grade level for each school, district, county, and the state are to be posted on the Internet no later than July 17. Results for the Stanford 9 and the Standards Test and results for the SABE/2 are on separate reports.

How are test results reported for individual students?

The Stanford 9 and SABE/2 results are reported as national percentiles. A national percentile compares the student's results with scores of students at the same grade who were tested at the same time of the school year in a national sample.

The scores for the California Standards Test are reported as the number of questions the student answered correctly. There are no comparisons to other students. In future years, these scores will indicate levels of student performance such as advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. These levels of performance will indicate how well students are meeting state standards for each subject area tested.

Test results for students with special needs may be reported differently depending on what accommodations, if any, students were provided.

How does the STAR Parent Report for STAR 2000 differ from last year's report?

A new feature has been added to the STAR Parent Report. This addition is the California Reading List Number. This Reading List Number is printed near the bottom on the left side of the STAR Parent Report.

What does the California Reading List Number provide?

The California Reading List Number directs students, parents/guardians, and teachers to a list of state-recommended books that are on a student's reading level indicated by the student's Stanford 9 reading comprehension score. The Reading List Number ranges from 1–13+.

Where can parents/guardians find the California Reading List?

Parents/guardians can find the approved reading list on the Internet by following the directions posted at <http://www.startest.com>. Internet access is available at most California public libraries. Reading list information may also be obtained from local school districts or county offices of education.



How are the STAR test results used?

Teachers, parents/guardians, and students use individual STAR results to help monitor each student's academic progress. Individual student results are combined to prepare grade-level reports for each school, district, county, and the state. These results are used with other information about student achievement to help make decisions about ways to improve student learning and school programs.

Stanford 9 test results also are used to calculate the Academic Performance Index (API) school reports. The API, a major component of the state's accountability program, is used to rank the academic performance of California public schools, measure growth, and monitor progress over time. The Stanford 9 results for 2000 are being used to see how well schools met 1999–2000 growth targets.

How can parents/guardians help the school improve student achievement?

Schools invite parents, guardians, and other community members to become actively involved in improving student learning. Every school has various committees of parents/guardians who assist in school decision making, including the Parent Teacher Association and school site councils. In addition, individual teachers are frequently in search of volunteers to help with classroom instruction. Research studies show that parent/guardian and community involvement in the school can improve academic achievement.

How can parents/guardians learn more about the STAR test results?

The school provides a brief explanation about the results with the STAR Parent Reports. No school, district, county, or state results are reported on the individual student reports. These reports are available on the Internet at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests> on July 17. **Individual student scores will not be on the Internet.**